

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested in view of the following remarks.

Various claims are amended as kindly suggested by the Examiner to address the issues raised in the last several paragraphs on page two of the Official Action and the first three paragraphs on page three of the Official Action. Accordingly, withdrawal of the claim objections is respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 3, 7-14, 17-24, 26-31 and 36-38 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Uchino et al ("Uchino", U.S. Patent No. 6,001,068) in view of Richardson et al ("Richardson", U.S. Patent No. 6,494,847).

Claim 1 recites, *inter alia*, a wire member including a first wire and second wire, the first and second wires having respective end faces welded to each at a welded portion, a cover layer on the outer periphery of the wire member covering the welded portion, and a proximal-side cover layer disposed on the proximal side from the cover layer, without an axial gap between the cover layer and the proximal-side cover layer. The cover layer and proximal cover layer do not overlap each other. Additionally, Claim 1 is now amended to further recite that the cover layer is made from a resin material that reduces friction, and that the cover layer is formed such that the wire member is not heated at a time of covering the wire member with the cover layer. Neither Uchino nor Richardson discloses these features alone or in combination with one other.

In rejecting Claim 1, the Official Action takes the position that Uchino discloses each element of Claim 1 except for the proximal side cover layer. To cure this deficiency, the Official Action relies on the disclosure of Richardson. Here, the

Official Action concludes that it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to modify Uchino based on the disclosure of Richardson.

Uchino pertains to a guide wire having first and second wires A, B connected to each other. A tubular connector 12 is fitted over the joint where the first and second wires are connected, and bonded to the first and second wires. The first wire A includes a distal end portion 111 having an X-ray contrast material 112. The contrast material is coated with a synthetic resin or polymer material coating 113.

Richardson pertains to a guide wire 50 including proximal 52, intermediate 54 and distal portions 56. The guide wire 50 also includes polymeric jackets 62, 64, 66 which may be discrete or blended with one another.

Claim 1 recites the cover layer provided on the outer periphery of the wire member covering the welded portion. In addition, Claim 1 is amended to recite that the cover layer is made of a resin material that reduces friction. Uchino does not disclose these features. It is noted that these features were previously recited in dependent Claims 7, 17, 37 and 38, which are canceled by this Amendment.

The Official Action relies on passages in Uchino at column 6, lines 19-65, and column 11, line 11 - column 14, line 67, in an attempt to show the use of various materials corresponding to the claimed features. It is respectfully submitted that the noted passages in Uchino do not support the position for which they are cited.

The passage at column 6 in Uchino describes the use of silicone rubber as a coating layer 113. As shown in Fig. 1 of Uchino, the coating layer 113 is located at a distal end of the first wire A, and does not cover a welded portion, as claimed. Thus, the passage at column 6, relied upon in the Official Action to show a cover layer

covering a welded portion and the cover layer being made from a resin material that reduces friction, discloses nothing more than a portion at the distal end of the first wire A having a coating of silicone rubber.

The tubular connector 12 in Uchino, identified as corresponding to the claimed cover layer, is disclosed in lines 15-17 of column 5 as preferably being of the same kind of metal as the first wire A. Thus, Uchino fails to show a cover layer provided on the outer periphery of the wire member covering the welded portion, where the cover layer is made of a resin material that reduces the friction of the cover layer, as claimed.

The Official Action further relies on Uchino's disclosure at column 11, line 11 through column 14, line 67 in an attempt to show the use of silicone rubber in the manner claimed here. However, the disclosure beginning at column 11 in Uchino pertains to an alternative embodiment of Uchino's guide wire where the first and second wires are not disclosed as being welded to each other. Rather, first and second wire members are connected to each other via connector 63 such that they are brazed to the connector. Thus, this embodiment does not show a welded portion as claimed, and for this reason, lacks a cover layer covering a welded portion.

To the extent the tubular connector 12 may be considered a cover layer in the embodiment of Fig. 3 in Uchino, the tubular connector 63 in the embodiment of Fig. 8 is the element that corresponds to the connector 12 in Fig. 3. The tubular connector 63 is described as being made of stainless steel. Column 11, line 64. Thus, insofar as the tubular connector 63 may be considered a cover layer, the connector 63 does not cover a welded portion and is not made of a resin material, as claimed. The only resin material discussed in this passage is the synthetic resin coating 67. However,

this coating is provided at a distal end of the first wire 61. Thus, the embodiment of Fig. 8, as discussed beginning at column 11, still fails to disclose a cover layer made of resin covering a welded portion, as recited in Claim 1. Richardson does not cure these deficiencies. Accordingly, Claim 1 is allowable and withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Independent Claim 3, as amended, provides for a cover layer covering a welded portion, the cover layer being made from a resin material that reduces the friction of the cover layer. These features have been addressed in light of the cited prior art above, with respect to Claim 1. The arguments regarding Claim 1 are incorporated by reference here. For at least these reasons, Claim 3 is allowable and withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Additionally, Claims 1 and 3 both recite that the cover layer is formed such that the wire member is not heated at a time of covering the wire member with the cover layer. This feature is not disclosed in either Uchino or Richardson. In Uchino, the tubular connector, 12 or 63, is described as being connected to the first and second wires by brazing. The brazing process requires heating the wires to a temperature melting temperature and then joining to the connector. Thus, Uchino does not disclose that the wire members are not substantially heated at a time of covering the wire member with the cover layer. This feature further distinguishes Claims 1 and 3 over the cited prior art, and for at least this reason, these claims are allowable.

The remaining claims ultimately depend from either Claim 1 or Claim 3, which are allowable. For at least this reason, these dependent claims are also allowable.

New Claims 39-42 are added for consideration. Support for these claims is found in paragraphs [0084] and [0097] of the specification. No new matter is added.

Should any questions arise in connection with this application or should the Examiner believe that a telephone conference with the undersigned would be helpful in resolving any remaining issues pertaining to this application the undersigned respectfully requests that he be contacted at the number indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,

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